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# *HISTORY*

*of The*

## *Presbyterian Church of Bethel*

*Compiled By*

*Rev. R. A. Webb*

*Fifth Pastor*

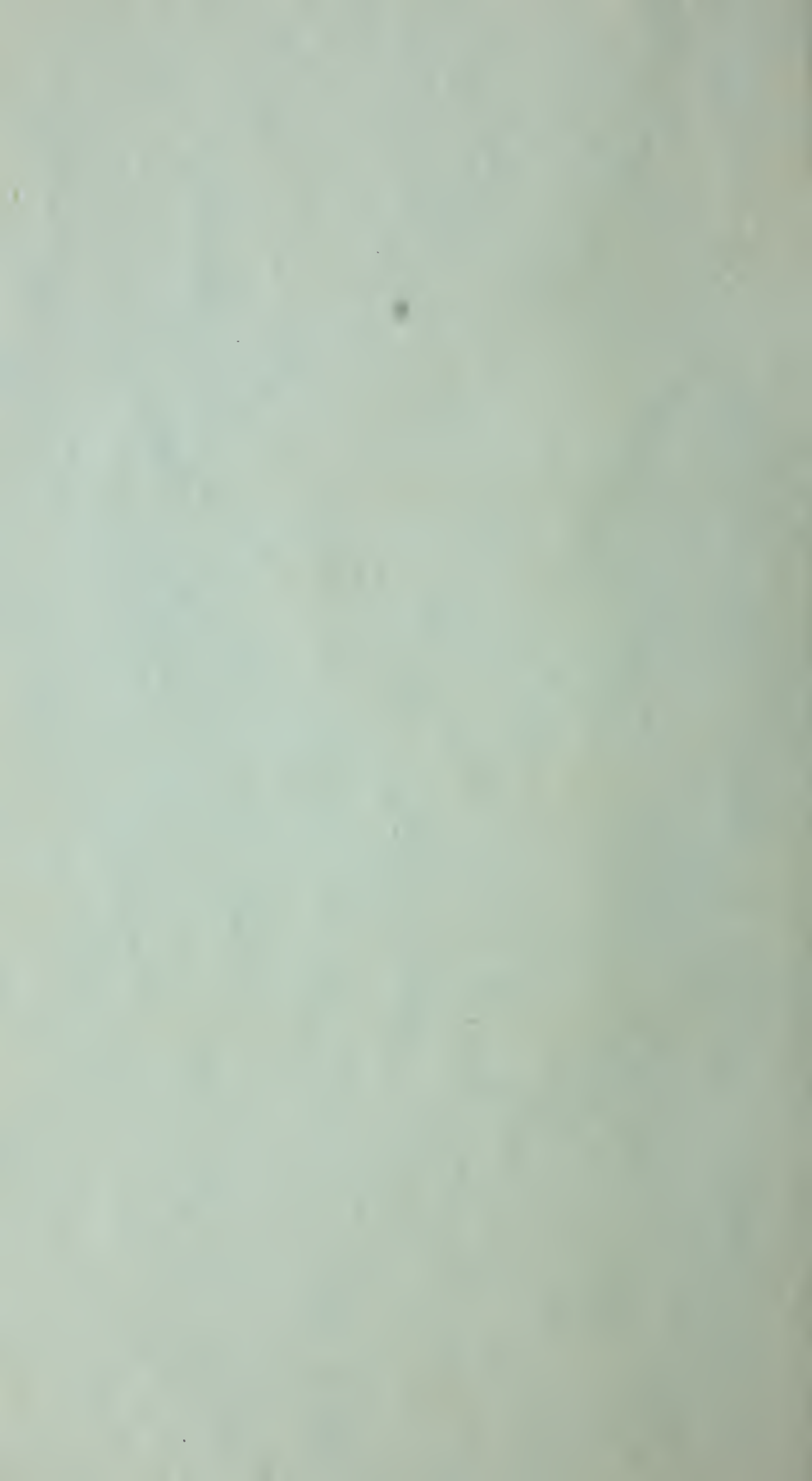
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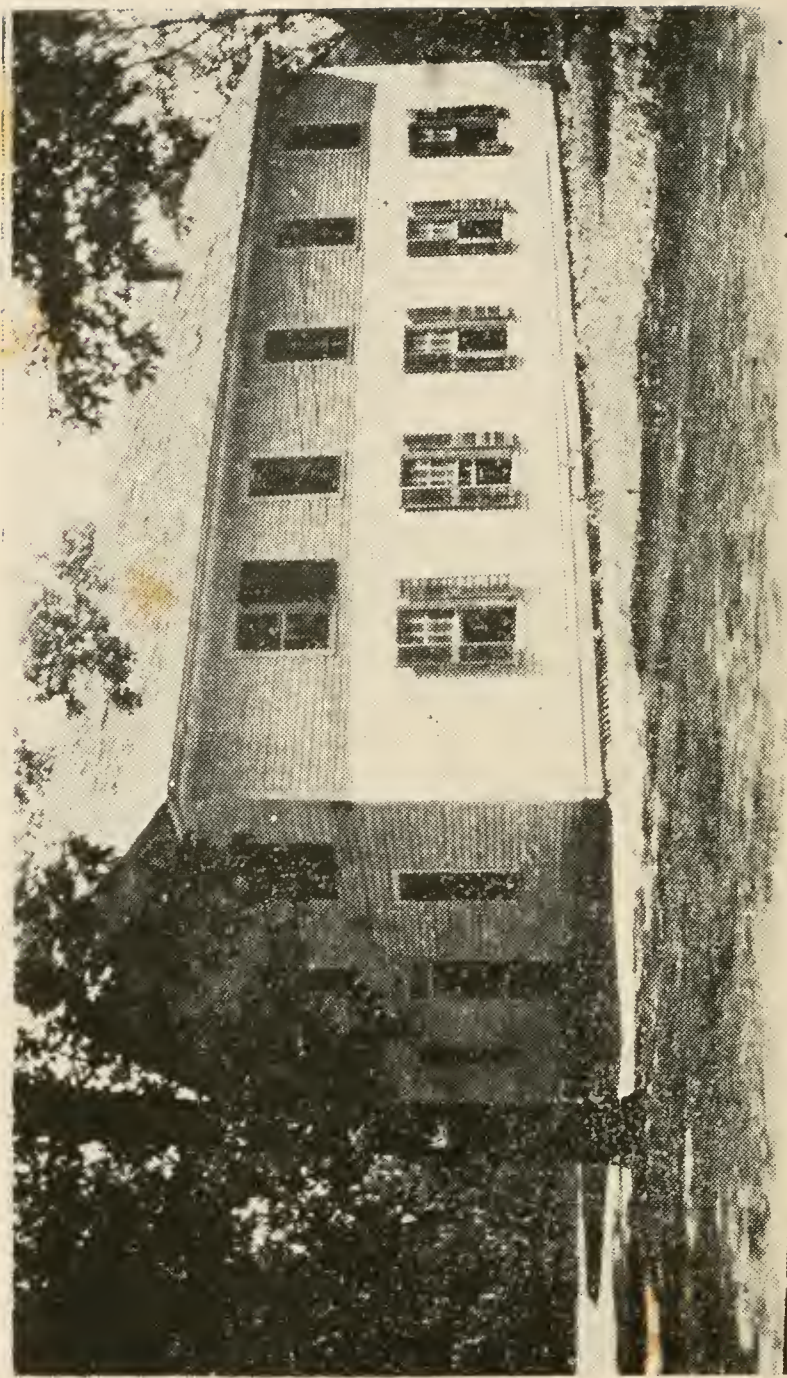
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BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PRESENT BUILDING ERECTED IN 1873



## PREFATORY NOTE

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This history is published under the auspices of the **Ladies' Aid Society of Bethel Church**. This Society was organized in 1876, and has increased in usefulness ever since. It is designed as an auxiliary in the prosecution of the work of the Lord. It seeks to accomplish this end by collecting money into its treasury, and then voting it to Foreign missions, Home missions, Education, and such other worthy objects as may recommend themselves. When the money is made, or collected from dues, it belongs to the Society: it may do what it pleases with it. None of its methods are questionable. Most of its revenue comes from dues which it assesses upon its members, or by the sale of articles which they have made. During the past ten years of its existence, it has made over 500 yards of carpeting, and contributed more than \$1,090 to various benevolent causes. The publication of this history is, on the part of the Society, a business venture.

In 1879 Rev. S. L. Watson, at the request of the Presbytery of Bethel, prepared an historical sketch of the **Bethel Presbyterian Church**, of which he was a son and pastor for forty-two years. This sketch was necessarily brief. It was scarcely more than an outline. It was very valuable, however, as the author's memory and associations reached far into the past. This little pamphlet is scarcely more than an expansion of his manuscript. When his words are used, the quotation is made known by the proper marks.

This history has been written particularly for the children of Bethel. It has been to the author a labor of love. It goes forth with its blemishes, but with the writer's prayer that God would bless to his beloved Church its own story, though poorly told.

Bethel, S. C.,  
Feb'y 10, 1887.

R. A. W.



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## THE HISTORY

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History delights to trace the ancestry of those whose story it writes; and when it discovers that the blood which courses through their veins bears upon its crimson tides the embellishing glory of a noble lineage, it justifies that people, at its own decisive tribunal, in rejoicing in the "stock" of which they sprang. In writing the history of **Bethel Church**, the first task, therefore, which imposes itself, is to tell something about the **Scotch-Irish**, from whom its congregation claim descent.

### THE SCOTCH-IRISH.

Going back to the earliest historic times, it is believed that the migration of the Scots "was through north-eastern Europe, by Belgium and the North of France, to Ireland. There they certainly lived in the third century, and there they first received the light of Christianity." (Howe.) In the sixth century a colony of these Irish Scots emigrated to North Brittany, and subjugated the Picts who dwelt in that region. Thenceforward ancient Calendonia, originally the home of the Picts, became the Land of the Scots, and **Scot-land** it is called to this day.

Owing to their inaccessible mountains, these amalgamated Picts and Scots were never subjugated by the Roman legions, though attempts were made to bring them under the iron heel of Caesar. And here I may remark, to the glory of this people, that they were never subdued by a foreign power, though defeated upon many a military field. Scotland is to-day, it is true, under the British Crown, but this happened by the natural accession of James VI. of Scotland to the throne of England as James I. in 1603. Thus were the two nations brought under the same political head, while Scotland to this day has its own parliament, and exercises a local and limited self-government. From the earliest dawns of their race-history down to the present time, the Scots' unconquerable love of liberty has been supported by heroic and successful endeavors. In the early days, Caledonia's crags and cliffs became the asylum of the oppressed; and as the Roman Empire, immediately upon the death of Christ, began to persecute his disciples, Scotland became a retreat for many who suffered for righteousness' sake; and, of course, having taken refuge in this mountain country, these fugitive disciples of the Nazarene told the story of Redemption to the wild tribes they found inhabiting the country, and with whom they now linked their destiny. In

all probability, therefore, Scotland drew its Christianity from persons who got it directly from the Apostles, and some of them, may-be, from the Divine Master himself. The Christianity of nearly the whole world came through the Romans, but, from the best accounts, the Scots derived it not from the West, but from the East where the last Apostle lived, labored and died. It is a matter of significance and of Presbyterian pride, therefore, to know that in these early centuries, the ancient Culdee Church of Scotland held the theology of Calvinism a thousand years before Calvin was born, and the essential principles of Presbyterianism after the balance of the world had gone off into the Roman apostacy. "Christianity," says one who made a special investigation into the question, "was introduced into Scotland very near to, if not during the lives of the later Apostles, partly by direct missionary effort, and partly by stress of persecution, driving the primitive disciples to the mountains of Scotland as an asylum." (Moore.)

This religious light, thus kindled upon Caledonia's mountain tops, for a season burned brilliantly, lighting up headland and peak, and flashing down valley and across lake; nor had it quite died out, when Wickliffe, the "morning star of the Reformation," appeared glimmering on the dark horizon of that illustrious day.

The Irish-Scots, (thus they are called because they came into Scotland by way of Ireland), when converted, abounded in missionary enterprises, founded their schools, and prospered in things temporal and spiritual, while envy and ambition on the part of their neighbors caused them many a hard and sanguinary struggle. Their fire of soul was unquenchable; their cheek of courage was never blanched. The foe who would invade them by sea or by land was surely and severely repulsed. But the chilling influences of "the dark ages" could not thus be rolled back. The appalling darkness which rose from Rome as a centre and source, and which continues to fume from the same quarter to this day, at last covered their hillsides and settled down like the gloomy fogs of the morning upon their lochs and glens and romantic valleys. Highlands and lowlands were alike overlaid with the murky darkness and moral midnight. Except a few secret camp-fires, burning in caves or brakes, all had been extinguished. Religious Rome had subdued the people which military Rome could not conquer!

But Scotland had a day of deliverance. It at length dawned. It was at first streaked with morning gray. The first shafts of lambent flame pierced the valleys among the mountains. Luther's voice had sounded on the Continent—the giant of religious liberty had been aroused,



and began to disenthral the nations of Europe. The sound-waves of religious freedom rolled until they struck upon the rocky shores of Caledonia. They sounded from peak to peak, and leaped from crag to crag with a magic spell in their note which had been heretofore unknown to the clarion horn of the mightiest clansman. John Knox, "who never feared the face of man," was aroused, and, catching the cry from the lips of the burning martyr, Patrick Hamilton, shouted it in the royal palace, in legislative halls, out of prison windows, on mountain tops, in brakes and fens, until all Scotland awoke, throbbed, and struck for her shattered altars and outraged firesides. The Hand which manages all things and flashes unseen hither and thither, "putting down one and setting up another," smiting here and caressing there, distributing tears to one and smiles to another, is not an eyeless fate that knows not and cares not, but rather the Hand of heaven's Omnipotent and Omniscient Ruler. That Hand was with Scotland in the struggle. It guided her energies, sustained her heart, nerved her will, and prospered the heroic endeavor. God smiled upon the land, and it was delivered.

But the darkness was not gone forever. James VI. of Scotland succeeded to the throne of Elizabeth as James I. of England. He was a Scotchman and a sworn Presbyterian. He wore the crown of Scotland and the crown of England, and thus united the two kingdoms which remain one to this day. This monarch made his reign notorious by that Assembly of divines which translated the Bible into English, which is the version in use to-day, and commonly known as "King James' Version." He made his reign infamous by turning against Scotland and the Presbyterians. In the religious controversy he sided with the Roman Catholics and abjured his Presbyterianism. Until he was crowned King of England he filled Scotland's ears with fair and honeyed promises. He was inconsistent, corrupt and unprincipled. In 1559 and again in 1592 Queen Elizabeth had attempted to solve her Irish troubles by settling the northern provinces with a Protestant people. The Protestants were law-abiding citizens, and made excellent substitutes for the Roman Catholic Irish. The scheme failed, though many English Protestants were settled in Northern Ireland under this policy. That which failed under Elizabeth, met with more success under James I. When he joined with the Romanists and Episcopalians, his poor Scotch brethren and subjects suffered dreadfully. The northern provinces of Ireland being near to Scotland, and their highland home having been made well-nigh unendurable, from time to time, the unhappy and persecuted citizens fled for a little rest to this section; brought it into cultivation and improved it in many ways,

while previous to their settlement these counties had been desolate and covered with heavy woods and marshes. There they were known as the Scotch-Irish.

"Thus, after the lapse of nearly a thousand years, the Scots, whom Ireland gave to Caledonia of old, came back again to occupy their ancestral homes, and the Irish-Scots, as they were called in the sixth century, became the Scotch-Irish of the seventeenth." Thus, you see, the name **Scotch-Irish** does not import a mixture of bloods, but it is the name by which those Scotchmen who live in the north of Ireland are designated. In all probability the English who had formerly migrated to the same provinces were eventually fused with them. The **blood**, therefore, of the Scotch-Irish is pure Scotch with a tinge of English. But as it was a religious matter that brought these settlers to Ireland, the name has taken on that complexion; so that to-day **Scotch Irish** in Ireland means Presbyterian as contrasted with **Celt** which means Roman Catholic.

There, in the north of Ireland, as everywhere the finger of history traces their destiny, the Scotch, (now to be known as the Scotch-Irish in contradistinction to the Scotch who reside in Scotland), flourished. They lengthened their cords and strengthened their stakes. They brought back to the Erin of their ancestors that pure faith and that Scriptural Church polity, which their forefathers had given to North Britain more than a thousand years before, while Rome, as yet, had not enforced her false creed and false forms.

There, too, in a material sense, they prospered. The God of their fathers blessed them. Says a writer: "South Ireland is profusely blessed with the gifts of nature, in a far richer soil, in a milder and more congenial climate; the whole, indeed, is an emerald in the flashing ocean. The North, is rougher, colder, and less congenial, and yet, as you enter the province of Ulster, you have left the region of filthy cabins, sturdy beggars, dilapidated villages, and wretched, neglected farms, and fields of sluggards, luxuriant with thorns and thistles; and you enter a territory of rich culture, of comfortable dwellings, and thriving towns. You have passed from a land of joyous often, yet careless idleness, where the pig, cow, and child herd together in miserable hovels, into a province where the diligent husbandman, the enterprising merchant, the intelligent, plodding mechanic are found, and the virtuous housewife, who 'seeketh wool and flax, and worketh diligently with her hands,' who 'maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant;' and 'whose candle goeth not out by night.' It is the land of our Presbyterian ancestors, inhabited by a race instinct with a sense of right, and hatred of oppression; of an instructed, and



not superstitious, conscience; educated in a pure faith, versed in that vigorous theology which Augustine, Calvin, and Knox, professed; their understanding and reason addressed by an educated ministry on the Sabbath day, and their household virtues stimulated and formed by the voice of praise and prayer at the domestic hearth."

But in their Ireland-home these people did not find peace. The government put upon them many galling religious disabilities, against which every sentiment of their liberty-loving souls daily chafed, and under which their manly, courageous hearts refused to lie. These, together with their crowded population, and influenced to some extent by a love of adventure, induced them to seek other homes. Some emigrated to friendly, Protestant Holland, where the Dutch opened their hearts, their country, their cities, and their homes. Others sought the Western shores of the Atlantic, where they planted themselves among the American colonies, and developed a social, national and religious importance.

These Scotch-Irish chiefly settled in Pennsylvania, and thence, by gradual emigration, they penetrated southward, through the valleys of Virginia, across North Carolina, and into the "up-country" of South Carolina. The Huguenots, who for similar fiery persecutions fled from their "vine-clad France," sought the mouths of the streams, and thence pushed their settlements upward toward their sources. The Scotch-Irish, on the other hand, being natives of a hill-country, sought the headwaters of the various water-courses, and thence migrated downwards. So we find the "low-country" of South Carolina settled, in the main, by people of French Huguenot extraction, while the "up-country" is populated by the descendants of the Scotch-Irish. A smaller number of these emigrants from North Ireland came directly to the port of Charleston, and thence by wagon, pack-horse, or on foot proceeded to the place of their choice.

From this on to the close, our narrative will restrict itself to a single settlement of these Scotch-Irish—to that community, which, for near a century and a quarter, has been known as

#### THE BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION.

When that tide of Scotch-Irish emigration, which flowed southward from Pennsylvania, had peopled that fertile region between the Yadkin and Catawba rivers, it continued to flow westward, and gradually the valley and great water-shed between the Catawba and Broad rivers were occupied by the same sturdy race. In this way, what is now known as York county, South Carolina, but which was then a part of Tryon county, North Carolina, was settled.

How characteristic of this Presbyterian people, in whose history religion had been for so long a time a potent and potential factor, that churches should be seen springing up, almost cotemporary with the settlement itself! Of these, now within the bounds of the Presbytery of Bethel, which comprises the four counties of Fairfield, Chester, York, and Lancaster in the State of South Carolina as its territory, the Waxhaw Church is the oldest, having been organized in 1755; Catholic, in Chester county, organized in 1759, occupies the second place in the chronological table; and Bethel, organized in 1764, is third; then follow Bethesda, Bullock's Creek, and Beersheba, all in 1769; Fishing Creek, 1770; Lebanon, about the same time; Mt. Olivet, 1784; Ebenezer, (formerly Indian Land), 1785; Purity, (now in the town of Chester), in the same year; Scion, (in Winnsboro), 1787; Fort Mill, (formerly Unity); 1788; Concord, 1796; Aimwell, 1799; and the balance subsequent to 1800.

Bethel Church is, therefore, at this writing (1887), one hundred and twenty-three years old, being twelve older than the independence of the United States. It was organized by the Rev. William Richardson, who was at the time the minister at "The Waxhaws" in Lancaster county, but who engaged in extensive missionary work in the regions of the Catawba and Broad rivers. Its house of worship is located in York county, S. C., ten miles northeast of Yorkville; five miles east from Clover, a village on the Chester and Lenoir railroad; four miles south of the North Carolina state-line; eight miles west of the Catawba river; and fronting north, on the public road leading from Clover by Boyd's ferry across the Catawba river to Charlotte, N. C. The house is a frame building, painted white, sixty-five feet long and forty wide, and is situated on the second level of a hill in a beautiful grove of oaks and hickorys interspersed with a small number of pines, and near a spring whose flow of waters seems perennial. It is the fourth house. The site was selected in the following manner: Mr. Andrew Floyd, Mr. Baird, and Col. Samuel Watson were appointed a committee to select a spot for the location of the building. These persons resided at extreme points from each other. In some way they agreed to meet at the spring, which now flows from the hill on which the church stands, in order to consult about the object of their appointment. On the occasion of their meeting, and upon comparing notes, they discovered that they all had travelled about the same distance, and so were near the centre of the congregational boundaries; and as the spot was pleasant to look upon, and water was near, they fixed upon this as the site of the building. Judging from the residences of this committee, says the Rev. S. L. Watson, in his sketch, (and he got this incident



from Mr. Floyd, one of the committee of location), the congregation, at its organization, covered an area of more than twenty miles square. "From the present site of Beersheba church to the Catawba, and from beyond Olney and the South Fork to that which has since been known as the 'Indian Land.'" Its territory, at present, extends from the Chester and Lenoir railroad on the west to the Catawba river on the east, and from the North Carolina state-line on the north to Allison creek on the south. There are several families all around who live outside of these boundaries, but these limits comprise the residences of the vast majority of the congregation. The area is, consequently, less than half it was at its formation.

The church was incorporated by the Legislature of South Carolina, March 22d, 1786, in *perpetuum*, with the title—"The Presbyterian Church of Bethel Congregation." (Statutes of South Carolina, Vol. viii., pp. 126, 134).

There is no accurate knowledge of the first communicants. If any roll was made at the organization, it has been lost. Indeed, the first written record in possession bears date "April 8, 1817." Consequently much of this history is traditional. But while the number and names of the first members have not been preserved, the membership, it is believed, was large. Mr. Watson in his early pastorate obtained "from a reliable source" a list of the first elders. These were David Watson, John Jordan, George Devinny, John Gullick, Thomas Neel and James Campbell. "Probably they were called to office at different periods, and were not all chosen on the day of organization." "Colonel Neel commanded a regiment in 1776 in the war with the Cherokees. He died in 1779. One of his sons, a captain, was killed by the Indians, and another, a colonel, by the Tories. Colonel Samuel Watson, afterwards an elder, (the grandfather of the author from whom we quote), was the commander of a regiment in the Continental army. But it is needless to go into details. The congregation of Bethel were Whigs to a man. Presbyterianism not only makes its subjects advocates for liberty, but fits them for the privileges of freedom, as the scenes at King's Mountain abundantly testified."

#### 1st PASTOR—1770-1776.

For six years after its organization Bethel was vacant; but it is impossible to believe that a church so large and so encouraging, as this was in the very beginning, could have been wholly destitute of the preached gospel. It is easy to imagine that faithful and energetic pastor of Waxhaw, Mr. Richardson, who organized the church, as occasionally visiting it to break "the living bread." While it had no pastor, we must believe that it fed during these years from the kindly hand of shepherds of other generous

flocks, though there is no record of such a fact.

"In 1770 Rev. Hezekiah Balch, a member of Orange Presbytery which then extended over the whole of North Carolina, received and accepted a call from Bethel. He served them as pastor for several years. While in Bethel he was married to Miss Hannah Lewis, a lady of rare personal charms and remarkable for her intellectual endowments. During his pastorate some changes took place in the congregation, and still greater in the country. During his residence the following persons were ordained elders: Joseph Bradner, Colonel Samuel Watson, John Howe, Samuel Craig and Adams Baird."

Mr. Balch was born in Maryland. In his early childhood his father removed to Mecklenburg, North Carolina. He was graduated from Princeton college in 1762. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Newcastle in 1768-'69, and ordained an evangelist in 1770. In the same year, he, with six others, was set off by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia as the Presbytery of Orange. He continued pastor of Bethel for about six years, resigning his charge soon after the beginning of the Revolutionary War, and removing over the mountains to East Tennessee, where his beautiful and accomplished wife showed mental derangement, and he "became widely known, for various reasons, in the church."

#### VACANT—1776-1782.

After the departure of Mr. Balch, Bethel was six years vacant. During this period the Church received occasional supplies from the Presbytery of Orange. For the most part those who ministered to it were the Rev. John Cossan, a missionary sent over from Europe by Lady Huntington, Rev. James McRee of Mecklenburg, and Mr. Francis Cummins, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Orange.

On the 7th October, 1780, and while Mr. Cummins was supplying the Bethel pulpit, the important battle of King's Mountain was fought. The mountain is one of the south-east foot-hills of the Blue Ridge. The main mountain rises in a high peak, and the battle was on the backbone of one of the western ridges. This battle-ground was on the extreme northwestern verge of Bethel's boundary, and about fifteen miles from the house of worship, and about a mile and a half south of the state-line between the two Carolinas.

After his successful battle at Camden, Cornwallis advanced to Charlotte, North Carolina, inflated by his victory over General Gates. He directed Colonel Tarleton to operate east of the Catawba river, and ordered Major Ferguson to embody the Tories of North and South Carolina in his division. On the 1st of October Ferguson crossed Broad river at Cherokee ford, and encamped on



this foot-ridge of King's Mountain. He had in his division thirteen hundred men, of whom five hundred were Tories. His plan was to march southeasterly across York county, destroy Hill's Iron Works, in the southeast corner of Bethel's boundaries, and effect a junction with Colonel Tarleton. He is reported as having said concerning his encampment—"Here is a place God Almighty cannot drive us from." It is traditionally handed down in Bethel, that he said "he would spend one night in Bethel Church, leave it in ashes by day-light, destroy Hill's Iron Works before dinner, and be on the east side of the Catawba before nightfall." This saying even if partly true shows how Bethel had impressed itself upon the enemy.

In his supposed impregnable position, which was, indeed, remarkably strong, Major Ferguson was attacked by a force of thirteen hundred and ninety men, of whom four hundred Virginians were under Colonel William Campbell, five hundred and ten North Carolinians under Colonels McDowell and Cleveland, and four hundred and eighty Tennesseans under Colonels Sevier and Shelby. The obstinate conflict terminated in victory to the patriots, Ferguson having been slain, three hundred of his men killed or wounded, and eight hundred prisoners and fifteen hundred stand of arms captured. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." After the battle ten Tories, who had been notorious for cruelty, were hung. The Americans had about twenty killed. Their dead and wounded were brought from the field on rude sleds, some as far as Bethel Church and graveyard. Tradition loves to tell to this day of brave women who mounted their horses and hastened to the scene of blood to do what the gentle hand of woman only can perform. Bethel divided with other patriots the hardships and dangers and death of that conflict, which was the first to prognosticate that independence, which came with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1782, and Bethel must reap her share of the praise.

#### 2nd PASTOR—1782-1789.

Mr. Watson continues: "After the close of the war, a call was presented to Mr. Cummins to become their pastor, which he accepted; and in the latter part of 1782 he was ordained and installed. The congregation continued to grow and expand, partly from immigration, and partly from the inhabitants of the land. During his pastorate the following elders were ordained and installed: Joseph McKenzie, Alexander Eakin, William Davis, and Andrew Floyd. In 1788 Mr. Cummins, while residing in Bethel as pastor and teacher of the youth, was chosen by the people of York as one of their representatives to the convention of South Carolina, which was called to decide upon the adop-

tion of the Constitution of the United States. His colleagues voted against it. This, or some other cause, created dissatisfaction in the congregation, and in 1789 he resigned his charge and moved to Georgia, where the writer of this sketch heard him preach in 1826. He had passed his four score years. He died in 1828, loved and respected by all who knew him."

Rev. Francis Cummins, D. D., second pastor of Bethel, was born in Pennsylvania in 1752. His parents were from North Ireland, and moved from Pennsylvania to Mecklenburg, North Carolina, when he was nineteen years of age. He was graduated from the old "Queen's Museum," in Charlotte, N. C., about 1776. He was several years a preceptor in Clio Academy in Iredell county, N. C. He was present at the meeting of the Mecklenburg Whigs, in which on the 20th of May, 1775, was read, from the Charlotte court-house, the celebrated "Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence." He studied theology along with his teaching under Dr. Jas. Hall. He was licensed by Orange Presbytery in 1780. In 1782 he became pastor of Bethel.

In 1788 the old Presbytery of South Carolina held its seventh session at Bethel. This was, perhaps, the first Presbyterial meeting ever held at the church. John Jordan was the representative of the Session. This meeting was notable, and is mentioned here, because certain members of the congregation formerly brought charges against their pastor, Mr. Cummins. This was, perhaps, the cause of his vacating the field in 1789, and not his vote in the State Convention, as Mr. Watson intimated above. Mr. Cummins was the moderator of the meeting, which proves that the charges were sprung against him. The following is a true extract from the minutes of that meeting:

"The following complaints were brought into Presbytery under the signature of John Howe against the Reverend Mr. Cummins and the Session of Bethel.

- (1) Complaint. For breaking a certain Latin School.
- (2) For unjustly depriving certain Persons of the Privileges of the Church.
- (3) For charging the Complainants with the sin of Sacrilege.
- (4) For craving\* the Parishioners on the Sabbath day.

This last complaint, though tabled by John Howe, was disavowed by him, and avowed by Robert Leper to be by him defended.

Witnesses adduced by the Parties were heard, whereupon Presbytery came to the following Decisions on the charges

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\* "Craving" perhaps means begging for money; and this complaint apparently charges Mr. Cummins with urging his people on the Lord's day to pay their subscription to his salary.



respectively:

(1) This complaint was altogether unsupported. Mr. Cummins was no Ways influential in breaking said school.

(2) Unsupported. Mr. Cummins and Session were perfectly right in suspending from Privileges the Persons in question.

(3) Groundless. As to the Complainant (John Howe) the Presbytery do judge: That notwithstanding what acknowledgements of Guilt and Repentance they (the Presbytery) might demand of him for exhibiting these groundless Charges against a Minister of the Gospel and ruling elders, together with his strange Conduct in signing a Complaint against said Cummins for craving the People on the Sabbath day, which he, before Presbytery, says he did for another person whom he adduced as Witness, yet they (the Presbytery) Charitably judging the most favourably and hoping the best, do forgive him for said Things, and recommend a forgiving and friendly Disposition to Mr. Cummins and Session towards said Complainant on his returning to his former Standing as a member with them and supporter of the Gospel.

And respecting all such as have been suspended from Privileges for the Breach of Confidence as Subscribers to the Society, Presbytery require them to discontinue their offence, and to be restored to the Privileges of the Church from which they stand justly debarred. And with Respect to the Complainant, Mr. Robert Leper, the Presbytery do not only find the Charge unsupported, but the Contrary proven. They do, therefore, judge that Mr. Cummins is clear of the Charge alleged against him. And as to Mr. Leper, notwithstanding the Injustice he has attempted to do Mr. Cummins' Character, the Presbytery pass no Judgment on him, but only submit him to Mr. Cummins and Session.

As the Presbytery really believes that it would not only contribute to the Honor of Religion, but be mutually advantageous to Pastor and people, in promoting and preserving Harmony and Love between them:

Ordered, therefore (and pursuant to an Order of Synod), that the Pastor be annually, and at the Fall Presbytery inquired at as to the Discharge of his ministerial Duties; and that the Congregation at the same Time produce some satisfactory Evidence to Presbytery of a Settlement with the Pastor, or be judged guilty of a violation of that Faith which they publicly pledged to their Minister and to Presbytery."

It was this case, in all probability, which eventually caused the withdrawal of Dr. Cummins from his pastorate. The case, apparently, grew out of an attempt to collect certain subscriptions of money, made to the pastor's

salary.

### A VACANCY AND A SCHISM.

After Dr. Cummins resigned, the church had no pastor for seven years. This is, perhaps, the gloomiest period of the Church's history. Concerning it Dr. Howe writes in his first volume: "About the time of Mr. Cummins' departure, it (Bethel) began to decay. A spirit of sloth and inattention to the gospel seems to have prevailed. Unhappy dissensions arose among the people through animosity and party spirit, so that they not only became disaffected with one another, but some were, unhappily, disaffected with their honorable and devoted pastor, who had spent some of the best years of his life among them. This want of unanimity weakened their strength, and prepared the way for the changes which took place. The congregation sought supplies from Presbytery, and was visited for this purpose by their former pastor, Mr. Cummins, Mr. Templeton, Mr. W. C. Davis, Mr. Dunlap, Mr. Gilleland, and Mr. James McRee, of North Carolina. Part of the congregation resided across the State-line in North Carolina, and besides the dissaffection to which we have referred, were remote from the place of worship, and uniting with those contiguous in South Carolina, they congregated as a church under the name of Olney, and built themselves a house of worship. This division took place in 1793, and the Olney Church was connected with the Presbytery of Orange, and Wm. C. Davis became their pastor. The southern part of the congregation continued under their former organization, with renewed earnestness and zeal, after the division with diminished numbers." But subsequent history discloses the truth that, while the formation of Olney may have been distressing at the time and under the circumstances, yet, under the providence of God, it has redounded to the preservation of Presbyterianism to a section which might otherwise have lost this great blessing. The mother church has survived, and another centre of influence has been established.

### 3rd PASTOR—1796-1801.

In 1796, Bethel united with Beersheba in calling Rev. George G. McWhorter to be their pastor. Heretofore Bethel had been able to employ a pastor without uniting with another church; but the Olney defection seems to have so dispirited the congregation as to compel the church to seek an alliance with Beersheba. **This is the only time in its history that it has been united in a pastorate with another organization.**

I quote again from Mr. Watson: "After serving the church five years in connection with Beersheba, which had been previously organized with a part taken from Bethel, Mr. McWhorter resigned the charge in 1801, and



removed south; and at a later period to the State of Alabama. Having served his generation through a long life, he entered upon his rest. As the writer of this sketch was baptized in infancy by this servant of God, he made it convenient in 1829 to visit him at his home in Alabama, that he might see his face again in the flesh. He found him social in his manners, pious in conversation, and strong in faith and hope. Like most of God's ministers he was poor. Destitute of the luxuries, and almost of the necessities of life, yet he continued to preach the gospel to the destitute with all the vigor of youth, 'esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward!'"

#### VACANT—1801-1811.

Bethel now remained vacant for ten years. In the meantime the Reverend Humphrey Hunter supplied the pulpit from time to time, with other ministers. The congregation had learned a lesson from the Olney defection, and instead of becoming cold and indifferent and divided, while without a pastor, they unitedly built the third house of worship. We are not informed when the first house was erected. The church was thus prepared for the long and prosperous ministry of Rev. Jas. S. Adams.

#### A LONG SUPPLY—1811-1840.

"In 1811," continues the history of Mr. Watson, "Rev. Jas. S. Adams, who had been preaching in Dorchester, S. C., for six years, and who had been set apart to the full work of the ministry by an Association of Congregational Ministers, removed to Bethel, and was invited by the congregation as a stated supply. He was a native of Bethel, and was born September 12, 1772, about four miles northeast from the church. He studied the higher branches of literature and theology under Rev. James Hall, D. D., of North Carolina. He continued his labors in Bethel for twenty-nine years, without interruption. It was not uncommon during this period, on sacramental occasions, for many families to leave their homes, come in their wagons, with provision prepared, and remain until Monday. (These were called 'camp-meetings.' The services generally began on Friday. They sometimes protracted themselves through the next week.) Three services were held each day, and social intercourse during the intermissions. All was quiet and orderly. No extra means were used to create excitement. Large crowds assembled. Many prayers went up, and often great good was the result. Rev. Robert B. Walker, from Bethesda, Rev. John B. Davis, from Fishing Creek, and Rev. James S. Adams made it convenient to be with each other on these occasions; and many of their respective members accompanied them, thus greatly increasing social

enjoyment and Christian fellowship.

It was during Mr. Adams' pastorate that Centre a branch of Bethel had its origin. It is five miles west from the church. An aged and pious member of some means was instrumental in the erection of a house for religious services, on week-days, for his own good and that of his poorer neighbors. This has been continued to the present time (1879). The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered once in the year. Many will look back to Centre as the place where the burden of sin was removed, and where they found joy and peace in believing.

It was a good Providence that sent Rev. James S. Adams to this people, and secured to them his services for so long a period. He was a man, like David, after the Master's own heart, endeavoring to do the will of Him that sent him—'A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.' But why speak of him? He was known in all the churches, and his name will long be embalmed in the memory and affections of the pious. In his ministrations, he was instructive, eloquent and most effective. He had a good supply of worldly wealth, and was an example to all in its distribution for the good of others. During Mr. Adams' ministration, the following persons, at different times were chosen and set apart as elders: David Watson, (father of the writer,) Jas. Moore, J. Gabby, McCord Pursley, William Anderson, Laban Suggs, William Watson, William Latta, Robert Johnston, and Adam Beamguard. These have all removed from Bethel, retired from office, or entered upon their rest above. Joseph Adams died April, 1860, having been an efficient elder for forty-eight or forty-nine years.

In the early part of 1840, Mr. Adams, feeling the infirmity of his age, resigned his charge. Though he continued to preach occasionally, and always with great acceptance to the last. He departed this life Aug. 18, 1845, in the 71st year of his age, and in the 48th of his ministry. His death was sudden. In the midst of his household, and seated in his chair, without a struggle, he ceased to breathe. 'The end of the righteous is peace.'"

As the ministry of Mr. Adams had more to do with forming the character of the church than that of any other minister, Mr. Watson at this point arrests his narrative and gives himself to the following reflections:

The religious instruction in Bethel has been strictly Scriptural, as set forth in our (Presbyterian) Standards. While the great doctrines of the gospel have been exhibited and maintained as truths to be believed, they have, at the same time, been presented as practical in their nature, and leading to good works. A prominent place has been given to the observance of the Sabbath to the religious training of children and servants. Yet the main reliance



for success has been on the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit. At different times during Mr. Adams' pastorate (supplyship) the special presence of the Spirit was enjoyed; when the church was refreshed and many were added to her numbers. At the close of the year 1832, after one of these gracious visitations, one hundred members were added to the church. Some of these at the present time (1879) are among her most efficient workers."

"The means and opportunities were not without effect upon the people. Their reading was mostly confined to the Scriptures and pious books. Of course, in a knowledge of fashionable literature and worldly wisdom, they were behind many other people. But they were well versed in Scripture knowledge, and the elements of a wholesome morality. Strangers, who attended their solemn assemblies, could not but observe the good order and solemn attention which were given during the Sanctuary services."

"At the close of Mr. Adams' pastorate (supplyship) but little change could be perceived in domestic arrangements, personal dress and manners, social hospitality, and such like, as could be seen in many other places. For this, in addition to the disposition of the people, there were other reasons. The soil, being naturally thin, did not furnish the means for luxurious indulgence. Wealth to most persons was out of the question, and they were content with a plentiful subsistence, while a spirit of pride kept them from debt. The leading members in society were, for the most part, imbued with the spirit of piety—they denied themselves and other followed their example. In addition to plain preaching of the gospel, Bible classes, Sabbath-schools, and social prayer-meetings had a most happy influence on the youth in connection with the home instruction through this series of years. In those days only a few families enjoyed the luxury of a carriage. They went to the sanctuary on foot or on beast of burden. Some now remember the helpless father, who was brought to the church-door in a farm wagon, and carried in his chair by his sons to feast on the fat things of the sanctuary; and the mother in Israel, who walked ten miles, when past three score and ten years, to meet with the great congregation on sacramental occasions. \* \* \* But little complaint was then heard about distance or roads—ordinances were privileges, and their conduct said, 'a day in thy court is better than a thousand.'"

It may here be observed that this picture of "the olden times," so pleasantly drawn by the pen of Mr. Watson, is, down to the present day (1887), still true to life. The Bethel people have never been ashamed nor afraid of honest and honorable work. Hence they have accumulated many comforts about them during all these years of toil,

which were unknown to their forefathers. Men may still be seen clothed in the warm and "tasty" home-spun and home-made jeans; and the old "rag carpet" may still be seen on many floors, reminding of the past and affording much comfort for the present. The people still love the house of the Lord, and reverence and respect, profoundly, all sacred things, though, it must be confessed, that there is a deal of grumbling about "bad roads." The sacramental occasions still continue to be great occasions, and multitudes assemble from far; but as churches are thicker now than then, these crowds cannot be so large. This people are not given to change. May they ever cherish the memory and religion of their ancestors!

#### 4th PASTOR—1840-1882.

The Rev. James S. Adams, who had, for twenty-nine years so faithfully and successfully ministered to this people in spiritual things, in 1840 asked the congregation, in view of his infirmities, to release him from the ministerial care of the church. This was done; and the same year a call was made out for the pastoral service of Rev. Samuel L. Watson, then pastor of the Steel Creek Church in Mecklenburg county, N. C., and under the Presbytery of Concord. Mr. Watson accepted this call, and on the 25th day of April, 1840, he was installed pastor of the church.

I again quote from Mr. Watson's own account: "At the commencement of his labor in Bethel, as far as could be known, the number of communicants was between four and five hundred. The list of their names had been mislaid. Of this number a fourth or fifth were persons of color. The session was composed of Messrs. Jos. and Wm. Adams, Wm. Watson, Wm. Latta, Rob't Johnston, and Adam Beamguard. In September, 1840, the following elders, having been elected, were ordained and installed: Rob't Barber, J. J. Wilson and Zenas Kerr. In 1844, A. A. McKenzie and J. D. P. Currence. In 1857, James Wallace, Dr. A. P. Campbell, and J. F. Harry. In 1866, David A. Adams, J. L. Adams, and J. C. McCarter. The following compose the present (1879) session: J. J. Wilson, A. P. Campbell, J. L. Adams, S. L. Adams, Thomas J. Nichols and Samuel B. McCully.

The church had been without Deacons, and, in 1845, the following number were elected to that office, ordained and installed: Messrs. Hugh Currence, James Wallace, Wm. Currence, Milton H. Currence, Jno Kerr, Allen Lawrence, S. L. Adams, Rufus J. Adams, Newton B. Craig, J. Neely, J. L. Wright and Lawson Wilson; and others at different periods since that time. The following compose the present (1879) Board of Deacons: Dr. W. E. Adams, M. H. Currence, David Jackson, A. H. Barnett, J. C. Patrick, Wm. I. Stowe, and J. W. Beamguard.



The instruction of our youth, so diligently carried on during the labors of the previous pastor, (Mr. Adams), has been continued. The Sabbath-school, monthly concert of prayer, family visitation, to a limited extent the Young Men's Christian Association, the Ladies' Aid Society: these tend to do good, and greatly aid in keeping up practical godliness. But the main reliance is on the ministration of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments of the Church, made effectual, in answer to the prayers of God's people, by the Holy Spirit.'

"During the present pastorate," continued Mr. Watson in writing of his own ministry, "the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper has been administered one hundred and eighteen times, and, in the good providence of God, the pastor, with one exception, has been present on all these occasions. He has never been absent from the pulpit more than one Sabbath at a time, until last summer, from personal sickness or any other cause. Praise the Lord for His mercies!

No year has passed during the present pastorate without additions to the church, ranging from twelve to twenty. During the last few years the attendance has been larger, the attention better, and the additions greater than at any former time. On sacramental occasions we have the assistance of neighboring brethren, and on two or more occasions the services have been continued by them through the week, especially at night. Crowds would be present. But it was the old gospel—'Christ and Him crucified.' The labors of these brethren were blessed, and they will not lose their reward. The number of additions for a few years past will speak for itself. In 1872, there were added on examination 38; in 1875, 18; in 1876, 41; in 1877, 11; and in 1878, 64; and in the same year 19 adults were baptized. During the present pastorate there has been an average of twenty additions to the church per annum. The total number is eight hundred and three. Infants baptized, nine hundred and fifteen; adults, one hundred and thirty; total number of baptisms, one thousand and forty-five. We now (1879) number on our books three hundred and forty-five. Sixty or seventy persons of color left the church after the war. Only a few of them now remain in our communion. Bethel has also been circumscribed in her boundary. Six churches surround her—four of her own denomination and two of the Independents, now of us—to say nothing of other denominations. All of these are strictly in her original bounds, except Beersheba, and all drawing from Bethel. But with God's blessing, while she has sent hundreds to strengthen and create churches, she is still strong in numbers."

On September 17, 1882, the long and useful pastorate of Mr. Watson, extending over a period of forty-two years,

came to an end by his own resignation. He requested the congregation to unite with him in petitioning the Presbytery of Bethel for the dissolution. He assigned the general infirmities of age, (being eighty-four years old), as his reason for his resignation. In response to this petition, the congregation unanimously and with feeling adopted the following paper, which reveals how dear to the heart of this people their aged pastor was. The paper reads:

"1. We had fondly indulged the hope, that this tender relation between us and our aged pastor might continue, until he should pass to the sweet influences of the heavenly scenes. Our desire, however, is now, as it has ever been, to do his pleasure. We, therefore concur with him in his request, sorrowfully on our part, and just simply because it is his desire.

2. We feel impelled by the occasion, to the Great Head of the Church with thankful hearts, adoring the grace whereby we have enjoyed the unwonted privileges of the services of a faithful and godly minister for near a half century. We recognize the hand of mercy in all that he has done for us as a minister of grace; and call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless and magnify the great and holy name of the Lord for this distinguished favour.

3. As he retires from his long and useful pastorate, and yet to live among us still, we confess our obligations to him for having given us one-half of his entire life. Long has he stood between us and God—between the Cross of Calvary and the Judgment Bar—between the glories of heaven and the glooms of hell—with 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God' in his hand—dealing out its doctrines and exhortations, its promises and threatenings, to the conversion and edification of ourselves and kindred. He has baptized our children, visited our sick, buried our dead, cheered our bereavement, and in innumerable ways blessed our people with wealthy blessings. Wherefore, we are profoundly grateful. His memory will ever be fresh, even as his sainted life has been fragrant. As children part with a tender parent, so part we with our beloved pastor.

4. As long as a beneficent providence may lengthen the silver cord of his life, we pledge him our respect, esteem, love, sympathy, and aid in every time of trouble. As long as he dwells among us, we ask for his counsels and prayers. As he walks towards the extreme verge of his earthly life, so will we gather the shining mercies of Him, who remembered His wounded and broken-hearted mother in the midst of the agonies of the cross, into the evening of his declining day."

Another resolution adopted directed that this paper be sent to the Presbytery to convene at Bullock's Creek in



September, in order that that body might know the feeling of the Church in this matter. It was done as ordered; and on September 23, 1882, the Presbytery spread this minute upon its records: "That the pastoral relation be dissolved, and he be released from the charge, solely on the ground that he requests it." Thus the action of the congregation and of the Presbytery was taken simply to oblige Mr. Watson.

On November 13, 1882, this good and faithful minister, at his own residence about a mile and a half from the Church, where he had resided during his long pastorate, passed to his final rest. He was a son of Bethel, being a child of David Watson, an elder, and Margaret Watson, who resided in the southern part of the congregation, about seven miles from the house of worship. He was born February 5, 1798, and was consequently in his 85th year when he died.

Mr. Watson received his preparatory training in the noted academy of the Rev. J. McKimie Wilson, D. D., located in the bounds of Rocky River congregation, Cabarrus county, N. C. He was graduated from the South Carolina College at Columbia in 1820. He taught for two years, and then entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N. J., where he remained three years, completing the regular course in theology in 1826. In November of the same year he was licensed as a probationer of the gospel ministry by the Presbytery of South Carolina in session at Upper Long Cane in Abbeville county, S. C. He immediately went upon a missionary tour to Alabama, and Montgomery City was the centre of his operations, being the first to preach at that capital. Returning to his native state, he was ordained an evangelist March 15, 1828. He intended returning to his Alabama work, but Presbytery revoked its consent, on the ground that he was too much needed at home, and he was settled in 1829 as pastor of Steel Creek Church in Mecklenburg county, N. C., sixteen or seventeen miles east of Bethel. Here he continued until 1840, when he crossed over the Catawba to take charge of his native Bethel. While in Steel Creek, he was married to Miss Nancy Hannah Neel, the daughter of Col. S. Neel. They had eight children, three of whom died in infancy; one became a Presbyterian minister, and died in the prime of manhood; and four are now (1887) living.

Mr. Watson was a preacher of the gospel for fifty-six years; for forty-two of these he was pastor of Bethel. In personal appearance, he was tall, slender and perfectly erect. When a young man, however, he was said to weigh two hundred pounds. In social intercourse, he was reserved and careful in his speech, yet pleasant, instructive, and at times humorous. Plainness and frugality

characterized his life at home. He was a man of much prudence, safe and judicious in counsel, and slow to speak of the faults of others. He was careful to maintain the mastery over his appetites. All his mental exercises were dominated by a love of truth, his conduct was controlled by a love of right, and his heart was filled with the love of God. Upon the foundation of truthfulness, uprightness and godliness, he had reared the superstructure of his solid character. Eminent conscientiousness was an outstanding feature. As a preacher, there was nothing brilliant or flashing about his pulpit performances, but what he said was sound. His style was what is termed by rhetoricians "conversational." As a theologian, he was a thorough Calvinist. He possessed a clear idea of the system, and loved it. As a presbyter, he was eminently conservative, yet he was an ardent sympathizer with all efforts at church extension. He has left an impress upon this church and community which the effacing hand of time will not soon destroy. His body rests in the Bethel graveyard, with that of his uncle, the Rev. James S. Adams, and among multitudes of his kindred and people.

#### THE CONFEDERACY.

In 1861, while Mr. Watson was pastor of the church, began that distressing conflict between "the North" and "the South," which for four long years drenched the land with blood, and drained the South of its flower and chivalry. The responsibility for this war and all its horrid consequences belongs to the North. They were the aggressors. The South attempted to repel an invader by withdrawing from an alliance with him. Her attempt to secede was an attempt at self-protection. She was acting upon one of the great primordial rights of human kind—the right to defend herself against her destroyer. If the Constitution had not guaranteed to her the right of secession from the Union, this original and indestructible principle of humanity would have warranted it. It is not human to expect that partisan histories will place the responsibility of this cruel war at the door of the victorious. The weak have few friends: the multitude go with the strong. But the unborn historians of the future may do justly and locate the moral responsibility of this fratricidal conflicts where it belongs.

One end sought to be accomplished by the fomenters of this strife was the emancipation of Southern slaves and the abolition of the institution. The people of Bethel were mostly slave-holders. They were not extravagant admirers of the system. There were some among them who regarded it as unprofitable and unpleasant. Still they said that, by the word of the Lord, it was a permissible relation. Legally and morally they had a right to their slaves, and so



did the balance of their Southern fellow-citizens. When, therefore, they saw one section of the country usurping the dictator's place, and ordering them to liberate their slaves, their souls were fired, as might have been predicted from their past history. It made no difference then whether they thought slavery politically or financially desirable, the piercing cry of threatened Liberty was heard, and they volunteered, with their countrymen of all quarters, to resist unto blood the unrighteous oppression of the North.

The plan which the South adopted for its defence was withdrawal from the Union. Her sister States at the North had violated, by this interference, as well as in other ways, the compact which bound the sections together. They complained, but complaint brought them no relief. They had the Constitutional right of secession guaranteed to them in the original bill of rights. When Congressional efforts on the part of the representatives of the South, and popular outcry from all over the Southland, failed to accomplish anything, the States affected claimed their original and Constitutional right, and sought to retire from a union which had begun to be abused. This they would have done peacefully, but the North declined to allow them their guaranteed right. They would have been less than men had they submitted without a struggle.

The people of Bethel enlisted in the Southern armies, not coldly and in an enforced manner, but with hearts ablaze with patriotism. Many a son, brother, lover, friend, who went forth in manly beauty and with a soul of courage, never returned to gladden the home that war had darkened. Some sleep in the graveyard by the Church, whither parental love brought and laid the sacred form; others sleep on distant battlefields, sheeted with a patriot's glory, though uncoffined and unsung. The record of the Bethel soldiers is not only above reproach, but worthy of a liberal meed of praise. May their descendants, neither for the sake of gain nor for the froth of sentimentalism, ever forget the heroic dead or the principles for which they bled and died!

The faction which agitated the country until it was girdled with the fiery zone of war, had its sympathizers in the Church of Jesus Christ. The fanatical agitation did not forbear to disturb its sacred pale, until the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church forgot its spiritual nature and the ends of its existence as a court of Christ. It passed its judgment upon the political question that was distressing and dividing the Commonwealth. At its annual meeting at Rochester, New York, in 1861, it categorically declared for the North and against the South. The language of the Church journals at the North, of the

Northern pulpit, of Northern presbyters, of Northern Church courts was severe and bitter in denunciation of the Southern people for withdrawing from the Union. They were called "rebels," "traitors," "schismatics," "heretics," and many other offensive things. If they were so bad, the Southern churches ought to have been cut off from Northern communion, and, in all probability, would have been but for their timeliness in withdrawing, and forming "The Presbyterian Church in the United States," which has been popularly known as "The Southern Presbyterian Church." This organization was effected at Augusta, Ga., in December, 1861. Since that time Bethel's ecclesiastical relation has been with this Southern Assembly.

#### 5th PASTOR—1882.

The Rev. S. L. Watson, as has been said, had been ministering to Bethel as its pastor since 1840—a period of forty-two years—and he was now in the eighty-fourth year of his age. The infirmities consequent upon his years made the duties of his pastorate too onerous for him, and his people sought an assistant. On December 7, 1881, Mr. Robert A. Webb, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Nashville, came to serve the Church for a probationary period. On the 23rd day of February, 1882, he was unanimously called to the co-pastorate with Mr. Watson, who had for a long time been reverently known as "Father Watson." This call was carried to Bethel Presbytery in session at Fort Mill, S. C., approved and placed in his hands by that body. On Friday, April 14, 1882, Mr. Webb was ordained and installed co-pastor with "Father Watson;" and, on his resignation which took place in the following September, Mr. Webb became the sole pastor of the Church.

Rev. Robert A. Webb was born at College Hill Lafayette County, Mississippi. He is the second son of Robert C. Webb, who for many years has been a reputable member of the Presbyterian Church. When fourteen years of age, his parents removed to Nashville, Tennessee. After three years preparatory schooling at the Culleoka Institute in Maury county, Tennessee, in 1874 he entered the Sophomore class in Stewart College, Clarksville, Tennessee, which was then in its transitional stage from a College to the South Western Presbyterian University. He graduated with the degree of A. B. from this University in the spring of 1877, and in the fall of 1877 entered the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C., completing the course of three years, in 1880, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Nashville at McMinnville, Tenn., April 19, 1880.

During the five years of Mr. Webb's ministry the following summary may be made: In 1882 George L. Riddle and David G. Stanton were ordained and installed Ruling Elders, making forty-seven from the foundation of the



Church; in 1883 the parsonage was built; in 1884 L. Berry Brown and William N. Wallace were ordained and installed Deacons, making a total of nineteen from the first; in 1885 a Session-Room and recess were added to the rear of the Church building; eighty-one members have been added to the Communion, and eighty-five lost by death or otherwise; the Church now (1887) has five Ruling Elders and six Deacons, and a membership of three hundred and ten.

(Beyond these mere statements of fact the writer declines to say more about himself or his work).

A few more things remain yet to be told before this history can be drawn to its close.

#### THE MOTHER OF MINISTERS.

Bethel is entitled to this honorable distinction. It has been a nursery to the Church. It has been organized one hundred and twenty-three years, and for seventy-one of these it has been supplied with the gospel at the hands of her own sons—Adams and Watson. Besides thus providing for herself, she has given the Church many great and good ministers. Let us read the roll of which she is proud: Rev. Robert G. Wilson, D. D., who became the eminent President of the University of Ohio; his brother Samuel B. Wilson, D. D., from 1841 to 1869 Professor of Systematic Theology in Union Theological Seminary, at Hampden Sidney, Va.; James Gilleland, whose conscience was too tender on the slave-question to allow him to remain in the South, and who, therefore, removed to Ohio in 1805; John Howe, who went to Lexington, Ky., in 1783; Mr. Price; James S. Adams, who gave twenty-nine good and useful years to his mother church, who sleeps in her cemetery, and whose fragrant name is held in memory by a mural tablet on the wall to the right of the pulpit; James M. H. Adams, the son of the former, who died as the pastor of the Yorkville Church, who left his mark upon female education in the village of his pastorate, and whose remains lie among the Bethel dead; Henry and James Kerr, the latter of whom died when thirty-five years of age; Josiah Patrick; Samuel Lytle Watson, born a child of Bethel, lived the pastor of Bethel, and is buried among the people of Bethel—a marble-slab, appropriately inscribed, and hung on the wall to the left of the pulpit, tells of the respect and love of his native people and chosen flock; John F. Watson, the son of the former, died at Princeton, Ark.; A. M. Watson, cousin of the old pastor, Bethel's missionary to the Indians of West Tennessee, and now a pastor in Mecklenburg Presbytery; Andrew W. Wilson, who died in the harness in Mississippi in 1882; Samuel L. Wilson, now a pastor in Virginia; and James Adams Wilson, now the young pastor of Aimwell and Longtown Churches in Fairfield county, S. C.,—these last three are

the sons of one of Bethel's honored elders, Capt. J. J. Wilson. Sixteen ministers have gone forth as the sons of this Church. May this splendid succession of gospel heralds never be discontinued!

(Note: Since the original printing of above list in Dr. Webb's History the following sons of Bethel have entered the Gospel ministry: Rev. Leland Flanagan, now permanently retired on account of impaired sight and living in Clover. He and his family are members and regularly attendants at Bethel. Rev. Hamilton Johnston, now pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Cornelius, N. C. Rev. J. Haskell Dulin, now pastor of Armstrong Memorial Presbyterian Church, Gastonia, N. C. Rev. W. W. Arrowood, now pastor at Pulaski, Va. Rev. Carl McCully, now pastor at Sharon and Filbert, S. C. Rev. Geo. Riddle now pastor at Cherryville, N. C. Rev. W. Paul Nickell, Tazewell, Va. Rev. A. Lesslie Thompson, Troy, N. C.)

#### A MOTHER OF CHURCHES.

This is not too much to claim for this illustrious old daughter of Zion. She is now surrounded by six separate organizations, all founded upon what was originally her own territory, and to each of them she gave of her members with a liberal hand. Three of them—Olney, New Hope and Union—are in Gaston county, N. C., and three—Allison Creek, Beth Shiloh and Clover—are in York county, S. C. Olney was formed in 1793 in this wise: Rev. Wm. C. Davis, notorious for his theological errors, and who had been permitted to supply Bethel for a season, sought to settle himself over them as pastor. He was not acceptable to the South Carolina portion of the congregation, while the North Carolina members did not find him so objectionable. (The State-line divided the congregation). Those in North Carolina, together with a few in South Carolina contiguous to them, drew off from Bethel, and congregated under the name of Olney, and had Mr. Davis as their pastor. The new Church was connected with Orange Presbytery, and still thrives under the jurisdiction of Mecklenburg Presbytery. When Mr. Davis formed the Independent Presbytery, Olney was again divided, but it has since been united. About the same time New Hope was organized further to the east, and a considerable portion of its members were derived from Bethel. Union originally belonged to the Independent Presbytery which was formed under the leadership of Rev. W. C. Davis, and was received under Bethel Presbytery in 1863, when the Independent Presbytery was dissolved, and subsequently transferred to Mecklenburg Presbytery. Beth Shiloh belonged likewise to the Independents, was organized in 1829, and received under the care of Bethel Presbytery at the same time with



Union. Allison Creek was formed from Ebenezer and Bethel in 1853, and now embraces the territory, where the Rev. S. L. Watson was born. In 1881, during the pastorate of "Father Watson," Clover was organized. To form this Church the Session of Bethel dismissed seventy-nine members, and subsequently enough to make the number received from this source amount to about one hundred. Clover sprang out of Centre, a place a little south of the present village where Rev. J. S. Adams began to hold monthly services, and where they were continued by "Father Watson," who also supplied the organization until they received the Rev. M. R. Kirkpatrick as their first pastor. This is now a flourishing Church with one hundred and fifty members.

On Sabbath morning, June 29, 1884, "Bethel Chapel" was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. It is situated about six miles east of the Church, between Crowder's Creek and the Catwba river, on the Clover and Boyd's ferry road. The Rev. S. L. Watson preached occasionally at this point in a schoolhouse on the spot where the Chapel now stands, and known as the "South Point Academy." The Rev. R. A. Webb, on taking charge of the Church, began holding regular services there on the afternoon of one Sabbath each month. Mr. Robert Harper donated an acre of land to this Chapel, which was exchanged by the trustees of the Academy for the one then occupied by the schoolhouse. The building is now painted and comfortably furnished—a monument to the zeal and devotion of that people. This is not a separate organization, but is under the jurisdiction of Bethel, and forms a part of it.

Thus is it the rare privilege of Bethel to sit among her daughters as a fair and amiable matron, watch their behaviour, pray for their prosperity, and pronounce her benedictions upon them.

#### THE CHURCH'S PROPERTY.

The house of worship has been sufficiently described. It is secured by titles granted to the Deacons and their successors as Trustees. There are about twelve acres of land attached to the Church, three of which are enclosed as a graveyard. In the summer of 1883 the congregation cut and hauled lumber enough to build a two-story Parsonage, with seven rooms. Two acres adjoining the west boundary of the Church tract were purchased from Ruling-Elder J. L. Adams upon which to locate the building. In 1882 the Trustees of the old Bethel Academy, once famous as an educational institution, but which under the "free-school system" had become useless, sold the lands of the Academy, (about fifty-three acres), and the proceeds were turned over to a building committee, consisting of J. C.

Patrick, A. H. Barnett, W. E. Campbell, D. J. Jackson and J. L. Adams, to be employed in building a manse for the Church. With this money the house was erected in 1883, though it was not occupied until 1886. Mr. Webb was its first occupant. Two additional rooms were added in 1887.

#### THE GRAVEYARD.

The people of Bethel have always respected the dead. Three acres of a ridge in the rear of the Church, running north and south, and sloping east and west, have been enclosed by a stone wall as their Machpelah. It now contains three or four thousand graves. From many of these the destructive hand of Time has carried away all signs of the sleeping dead; but the vast multitude of marble monuments are so numerous as to strike the stranger with awe, and impressively remind this congregation that the dead, by thousands, outnumber the living. Tradition has two accounts of the first burial.

One report hands it down that the sacred soil was first opened to receive the mortal remains of a child; and, if so, since it is the faith of this congregation that all children dying in infancy are saved, it is a speaking fact to Bethel's multitude of bereaved parents—**grace owns the first dead.** The other tradition reports the first burial as that of a traveller who sickened and died by the wayside; and, if this be the correct account, it is a fact which tells how the stranger may find a home among this people—a fact which speaks in the language of the good Samaritan concerning all travellers to the tomb. The oldest grave-stone bears this inscription:

WILLIAM WATSON SON OF  
SAMUEL AND ELIZABETH WATSON  
DIED IN OCTOBER 1774 IN THE  
ELEVINT YARE OF HIS AGE

Behold how good a thing it is &  
How becoming well for such as  
Brothren ere in yunity to dwell.

Still another, as a sample of these early monumental inscriptions, reads:

SACRED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
ANDREW KERR  
WHO WAS BORN FEB. 23RD  
1755, IN MECKLENBURGH  
N. CAROLINA.  
CAME TO S. C. 1765



BOUR THE BURDEN THROUGH  
THE REVOLUTIONARY  
STRUGGLE AND DIED  
June 18, 1842.

There were, however, undoubtedly burials earlier than 1774, for many of the once shapely soapstones have crumbled away, until they are now but rough and ugly rocks. Indeed, tradition has it that there were burials before the first house was built. Here lie the sacred remains of five ministers of the gospel: Rev. W. H. Johnston, Rev. James K. Kerr, Rev. James S. Adams, Rev. James M. H. Adams, and Rev. S. L. Watson—pastors and people, strangers and friends, kindred and acquaintances, soldiers of the Revolutionary and soldiers of the Confederate wars, all sleeping side by side, and awaiting, with the patience of death, the blast of that trumpet, which will cause this vast city of the dead to heave with its teeming populace as they struggle back to life.

Another inscription reads:

HERE LIES YE BODY  
OF  
FRANCIS ARMSTRONG  
WHO DIED OCTOB'R  
ye 4TH 1779 AGED  
40 YEARS

Another with a motto undercircling a coat of arms carved into soapstone runs:

Vivit

Virtus

Post Funera  
IN MEMORY OF  
COL. JOSEPH HOWE  
WHO DIED JULY 15, 1799,  
AGED 56 YEARS.

Heaven has confirmed the great decree,  
That Adam's race must die:  
One general ruin fweeps them down,  
And low in duft they lie.

(Note: In the spring of 1938 the "Bethel Cemetery Association" was organized for the purpose of providing proper perpetual care for this sacred spot. In conjunction with the Church a full time care-taker has been secured. Funds for this purpose are provided by a annual membership fee of \$1.00 and by the establishment of Honorary Memberships of \$100 on

which the interest alone will be used from year to year.)

### CONCLUSION.

May the sons and daughters of Bethel cherish her blessed history. May they cling to the God of their fathers with increasing reverence and love. May they adhere, with determination, to those doctrines of Calvinism which made their ancestry illustrious. May they continue to love those principles of Presbyterianism which has made them strong and liberty-loving. May they wrap their arms around the ancient Bible, and the Bible's Christ, and refuse ever to be divorced from either. May their Bethel still be to them "none other than the HOUSE OF GOD and the GATE OF HEAVEN." May "her servants take pleasure in her stones and favour the dust thereof."

## Bethel History Since 1887

I have been asked to summarize the history of Bethel Church since Dr. Webb completed his intensely interesting review of the century and a quarter, from the beginning of the Church until his retirement from the pastorate in 1887, now nearly fifty years ago. This was Dr. Webb's first pastorate, he having come here in December 1881 as a licentiate. The Sessional Records of that period, and the testimony of the older members of the congregation still living indicate a ministry of a high order, as would be expected by those who are familiar with his later record as a preacher, pastor, writer and instructor in the seminaries of the Church.

After leaving Bethel Dr. Webb served as pastor of the Davidson College Church for one year. He then served two years, until 1892, as pastor of the Westminster Church, Charleston, S. C. From 1892 until 1908 he was Professor of Theology in Southwestern Presbyterian University at Clarkville, Tenn. From 1908 until his death May 23, 1919, he was Professor of Systematic Theology in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Kentucky at Louisville.

During the period from 1888 to 1936 the following ministers served Bethel Church: Rev. D. S. Robinson, pastor, 1888 to 1891; Rev. D. S. McAllister, pastor, 1891 to 1899; Rev. W. B. Arrowood, 1899 to 1905; Rev. Robt. Adams, 1910 to 1914; Rev. R. K. Timmons, 1914 to 1916; (irregular supplies served the Church during part of 1916 and 1917). Rev. G. W. Nickell, pastor, 1918 to 1924; Rev. A. H. Key, pastor, 1925 to 1933; Rev. Tilden Scherer, supply, February to October, 1934, and from January, 1936, until his installation as pastor May 10, 1937.

During above period the total church membership varied but little. There was a consistent record of accessions on



profession of faith, with a much smaller number on certificate from other churches. At the same time there was a stream of dismissals which kept the total membership near the same figure from year to year. The number reported in 1916 was 247, while the total in 1936, twenty years later, was 246. In the earlier days the membership had been well over 300, but the organization of new churches, particularly that at Bowling Green, in 1895, when twenty-five members were dismissed from Bethel at one sitting of the session, has resulted in stabilizing the resident membership around 250. The dependable source of accessions is the homes of the community. From these homes, for the most part through the Sunday Schools, there come into the Church each year a goodly number of fine young people. Many of these, as is the case in all country congregations, move from the community as they come to maturity, and join other churches, thus becoming a most substantial source of supply for the membership of those churches in towns and cities. Except for some shifting of the population along the Catawba river in the Chapel neighborhood, due to public utility developments there, the families of the Bethel community remain much the same as the years pass. There are many children and young people in the church homes and these must furnish the substantial nucleus for the maintenance of the membership and activities.

Since the close of Dr. Webb's pastorate in 1888, the following elders and deacons have served this church, with the year of ordination indicated: 1889: Elders: Dr. D. T. Partlow, Wm. E. Adams, Philander E. Moore, David M. Wallace, John H. Adams, Jr.; Deacons: Jas. M. Miller, Samuel L. Clinton, I. Beatie Faires. 1894: Deacons: David J. Glenn, Jr., T. Joseph Patrick and Henry F. Glenn. 1895: Elders: Jno. M. Craig, I. B. Faires and Dr. I. A. Bigger. 1896: Deacons; J. M. Adams and G. C. Ormond. 1900: Elders: S. W. Patrick, Dr. Thos. N. Dulin, and A. Campbell Harper; Deacons: R. A. Jackson, A. H. Barnett and T. J. Glenn. 1906: Elders: J. B. Ford and T. E. Brandon. 1903: Deacons: H. G. Stanton, J. M. Miller and B. J. Currence. 1913: Elders: W. N. Wallace, W. H. Glenn, J. E. Brandon, J. L. Currence and A. L. Thompson; Deacons: C. T. Brandon, J. R. Currence, W. G. Davis, F. C. Brandon and Clair Harper. 1921: Elders: R. A. Stewart and S. S. Glenn; Deacons: Paul Harper and W. R. Currence. 1927: Elders: D. D. Johnston and R. B. Harper. 1931: Elders: Frank M. Jackson, Harold Davis and J. M. Barnett; Deacon: R. W. Barnett. 1936: Elder: H. G. Stanton, (died Dec. 1, 1937); Deacons: Lacy K. Ford, Joseph William Brandon and James Howard Brandon.

The period between the beginning of the century and the

first of the depression years was marked by substantial increases in the gifts of the congregation to the benevolence causes of the Church. Some of the annual reports to Presbytery show gifts to these causes more than double those to local support, while for many years there has been an almost invariable record of larger gifts to others than to the support of the home church.

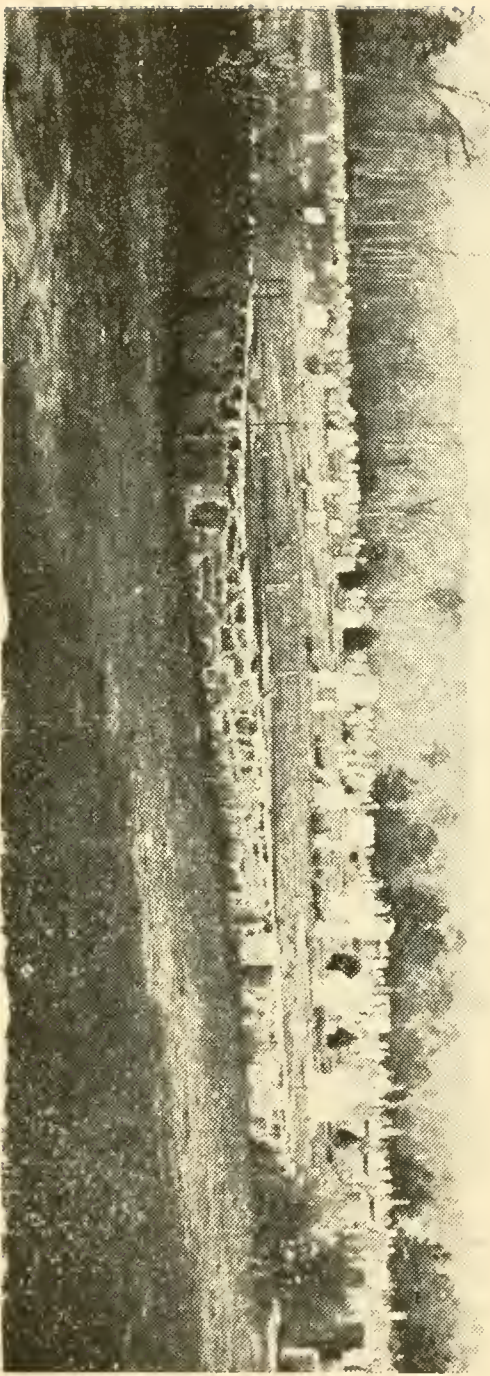
In 1930 the frame Chapel building was burned to the ground. A neat, substantial brick veneer building was immediately erected on the same sight and the work there has continued and grown substantially. In 1937 a substantial three-room addition was built at the Chapel to accommodate the growing Sunday school. This was made possible by a generous donation of brick by Mr. W. H. Belk, of Charlotte, and by gifts of cash, labor and material by members of the Chapel congregation and others, the whole representing an investment of about \$1,500.

The Sunday Schools (at Church and Chapel) now have a regular average attendance of approximately 200, about equally divided between the two. There are two active Young People's groups with a membership of about 35 each. The Woman's Auxiliary is divided into four circles and this organization functions in a splendid way along the lines recommended by the headquarters committees.

TILDEN SCHERER, Pastor.

Bethel Manse  
Apr. 1, 1938.





BETHEL CHURCH CEMETERY











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